

Town of Memphis
Pickens County
Alabama

HABS No. AL-869

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. AL-869

MEMPHIS, ALABAMA

- Location: On the west bank on the Tombigbee River, .8 mile east of the Alabama-Mississippi border, 5 miles north of the intersection of County Route 1 and State Route 32, 8.2 miles west of Aliceville, Pickens County, Alabama.
- Present Owner: Multiple ownership.
- Present use: Townsite to be partially flooded by the Gainesville Reservoir, a part of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway.
- Significance: The history of the town of Memphis is typical of that of many towns along the Tombigbee River which were bypassed by the railroads. Having risen during the economic prosperity in the antebellum South, the fortunes of these towns deteriorated when river traffic and cotton production declined after the Civil War.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of Settlement: The first white settlers moved to Memphis in 1841. "And I with my family settled in the town on the first day of November eighteen hundred and forty one being the first settlement after the native indian." (J. W. Wallis, "History of the Boundaries of the Town of Memphis, Alabama." See Supplemental Material, Section D. 7.)
2. Town Planner: James Williamson Wallis laid out the original town. "And it is true, that, whereas I was the owner of the land on which the town is situated, that I located the town, and in person I surveyed, and ran off inty [sic] blocks by streets, and subdividing blocks into lots, running as the compass then pointed without any variation . . ." (Wallis, "History")
3. Original and Subsequent Legal Descriptions: Memphis is located in Pickens County, Alabama, in the "North east fractional quarter section [Section 22] of Township 22 and of Range 17 West except ten acres square in the south west corner, and ten acres square in the north west corner. . . ." (1845 Petition to the Alabama General Assembly for Incorporation of the Town of Memphis. See Supplemental Material, Seciton D.4.) The Pickens County Courthouse burned in 1875, so no official records of the history of the town prior to that date exist. However, copies of several documents (included in Supplemental Material, Section D., below) remain in the hands of descendents of the Wallis family who originally settled the town.

The November 26, 1845 Petition for Incorporation, (See Supplemental Material, D. 4.) furnishes the legal description of Memphis and sets forth the privileges and powers claimed by the town. Articles 1 through 9 provided for the election of a president and commissioners and described their duties among which was the direction of "how all public improvement on the streets shall be done." Articles 10 and 11 enumerated wharfage fees for the improvement of the "east end of Cotton Street running to the river" which was being used as a wharf but was "not fit for receiving goods in its present condition." Articles 12 through 16 dealt with limits to the authority of the president and commissioners. Although these officials were not empowered to tax goods bought or sold in the town (Article 12), they were empowered by Article 13 to levy a street tax.

In 1891, James Wallis was asked to provide some legal information about Memphis, since he had originally surveyed the town. His notarized, but apparently unrecorded statement, "History of the Boundaries of the Town of Memphis, Alabama" (see Supplemental Material, D. 7.) sheds further light on the town. According to Wallis, the land on which Memphis was situated originally belonged to Bird Ivy's father and the "land was sold on one, two, three and four years time" with Bird Ivy making deeds as Wallis directed. Wallis donated land for both a church and a public steamboat landing. The church, "for the use and benefit of all orthodox Christian denominations" was built by subscription and was located at the intersection of Cotton Street and Church Street. The landing was located at the foot of Cotton Street by the river. Bird Ivy donated land for a "free burying ground." Most streets were sixty-six feet wide with the two major streets being 90' wide. Wallis concluded his account by stating, "There are some maps of the town, which are liable to mislead in determining the true situation, from lines being drawn representing Streets where there are none, numbering lots incorrectly. When I would furnish a map for public use in a short time this map would be defaced. Such was the situation of the map from which Mr. Wm. Johnston made a map. I pointed out to him the errors but even then he was misled, if what I have seen are copys of the map he made, which map is probably in the probate office, and should be corrected." (Wallis, "History of the Boundaries of Memphis," punctuation slightly altered for clarity)

No record of the nineteenth century incorporation of Memphis can be found in the Alabama Civil Archives. (Correspondence from Hugh M. Taylor, Alabama Department of Archives and History) On October 18, 1976 the Town of Memphis was once again incorporated with the following legal description:

N 1/2 - N 1/2 Sec. 22 T22S R17W

SW 1/4 - NW 1/4 Sec. 22 T22S R17W

SW 1/4 - NE 1/4 Sec. 22 T22S R17W

An election was held on December 28, 1976. J. T. Williams was elected mayor and Walter B. King, Clealia King, Robert Spencer, Marietha Windham, and Johnnie Mae Ivy were elected to the Council. (Order Confirming and Approving Elections in the Town of Memphis by Robert H. Kirksey, Judge of Probate, Pickens County, Alabama) Also included in the file pertaining to the incorporation of Memphis is a recent census of the area (Probate Minutes Book 21, pages 384-387) enumerating the members of each household, and a petition requesting incorporation signed by qualified electors residing in the area. (Probate Office File on Memphis, Alabama).

4. Original plan and construction; Alterations and additions: The plat map of the Town of Memphis found in the Office of the Probate Judge for Pickens County (see Supplemental Material, D. 2.) corresponds very closely to J. W. Wallis' "History of the Boundaries of Memphis, Alabama." Despite the curve in the Tombigbee River and the hilly terrain, Memphis was laid out in a grid plan according to compass directions. Slight variations in the grid appear as it accommodated itself to pre-existing township boundaries. The awkwardness of this rigid interpretation of the rectilinear plan is especially noticeable on the blocks adjoining the river.

Most streets were sixty-six feet wide and north-south streets were numbered as they ran west away from the river. On the plat map "Business Street" runs north-south along the river. Apparently intended as the major commercial street, Business Street, which was also called First or Front Street, was 90' wide. Fourth Street was also known as Church Street and extended south "to meet road leading South from town." (Probably the present dirt road leading to Pickens County Route 1. See Supplemental Material, D. 1.) The principal east-west street was Cotton Street which ran through the middle of town extending to a ferry landing at the river. Like Business Street it was 90' wide, these two streets being the widest in the town. Residents of Memphis state that the present road to the river is Cotton Street.

Other east-west streets were named for presidents and included Harrison Street and Jefferson Street.

The plat map reveals very little about land use within the town. It does designate a ferry at the foot of Cotton Street and a "Warehouse Lot" along the river south of Cotton Street. A small square within Lot 1, Block 20 near the intersection of Cotton and Church Streets may have been the location of the Union Church since this location corresponds to Wallis' description.

A larger, undated map of the general area drawn by Wallis (see Supplemental Material, D. 3.) shows that many of the residents of the town enumerated by the 1850 Census had land holdings along the west of the Tombigbee River adjoining the town. The cemetery is not designated on either map.

Wallis' letter to Col. L. W. Stone dated March 1877 describes several buildings located off Cotton Street close to the river (see Supplemental Material, D. 6.)

Newspaper articles and courthouse notices found by Jack Elliot, Jr. also give some idea of the structures which stood in the town. In 1860 J. G. Carraway announced that he ran the ferry and an establishment for "Public Entertainment." He was "prepared to take care of man and Beast." (Pickens Republican, January 4, 1860) Articles in the Macon, Mississippi Beacon indicated that C. W. Spann's storehouse burned in 1891 and that in that same year "John A Lloyd and Co. of Memphis, Ala. have added to their saw mill, an improved self-feed shingle machine, with a capacity of 30,000 shingles a day. They are made of cypress..." (Macon Beacon, July 4, 1891) In 1899, J. D. Purnell advertised "in the town of Memphis...Alabama, one two-story 10 room house with...barn, smokehouse, double cabin, good well, orchard and garden, with four acres in cultivation around the house, 60 acre woodland suitable for pasture or cultivation if cleared up. Also one warehouse and lot, with Fairbanks wagon scales..." In March of 1900 the following "Valuable Mill Property at Memphis, Alabama" belonging to G. F. Pail, and Brother was offered for sale at Carrollton, Alabama:

"one two-story frame building 32' x 96', one 40 horse power engine, saw mill, grist mill, and shingle n_____ all necessary to a complete outfit and in good order except the mill rock." (References from Jack Elliott's files)

Other structures in Memphis are described by Dr. Rufus Wyatt in the Autobiography of a Little Man, written in the 1930s. Wyatt related that in December 1888 there were "eight store houses but only two occupied" (Wyatt, p. 77) and that "in addition to the store, barrooms, and ten pin alleys Memphis had a hotel owned by John Sproul, a rich, redoubtable business man." (Wyatt, p. 80) "There was at this time a saw mill at Memphis but low price of cotton made lumber hard to sell." (Wyatt, p. 85) Mr. A. Brunn, who was enumerated in the 1850 Census "retired on the most uninviting spot of land in the Tombigbee swamp. Here he lived in a two-story log cabin, the top story for a refuge from high water in times of overflow." Wyatt, p. 79) Rol Brewer lived four miles from Memphis and "was born in the house he lived in and died at the age of 74 years in the same room in which he was born." (Wyatt, p. 85) Bird Ivy, one of the wealthiest men in the area, lived in a log house. (Wyatt, p. 78) Wyatt and Albion Hugh Cooper lived in houses about 100 yards apart situated on elevations separated by a creek which was spanned by a bridge. (Wyatt, p. 82) Wyatt's house had five rooms (Wyatt, p. 77) and a front gallery from which he could see the river (Wyatt, p. 87). Despite these dwellings, "a number of the houses...had been removed and the town was on the decline." (Wyatt, p. 77)

Today little remains of the nineteenth century town of Memphis, Alabama. Pickens County Route 1 makes a 45 degree bend to the west about one mile south of Memphis. A dirt road extends for about one mile north from Route 1 where it terminates at a T intersection with a second dirt road running west from the Tombigbee River to Route 1. (See Pickens County Highway Map, Supplemental Information, D. 3.) The north-south road is presumably Fourth Street (also called Church Street) and the east-west road, Cotton Street. A path (probably Jefferson Street) located 400 feet south of Cotton Street extends east to meet another north-south path, presumably Business Street, which intersects Cotton Street at a right angle and continues north for another quarter mile. In June 1978 there were only about twelve dwellings in the northeast quarter section of Section 22, Township 22 South, Range 17 West, where the nineteenth century town was located. Structures in the town consist solely of dwellings. No commercial structures remain. A house trailer serves as the only store. Most of these houses are dwellings built by their black inhabitants. The Sallie Bell House is typical of these. It is located about 1000 feet south of the T intersection on the west side of Church Street. Also located on the west side of Church Street facing the river are the Dooley House and the Parker House.

The Dooley House, built in the mid-nineteenth century, is located 600 feet south of the T intersection. The Parker House, built in the same period, is located 300 feet south of the T intersection. (Interview with Ernestine Parker Abbreviated architectural descriptions of these three houses appear in PART II., below.) The Charity House (HABS No. AL-871) and the Will Boykin House (HABS No. AL-870) were both acquired for the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway and were recorded with HABS measured drawings. The Charity House, built around the turn of the century, was located on the south side of Jefferson Street immediately to the East of Church Street while the Boykin House, moved to its site in the 1930s, was situated about 500 feet southeast of the Charity House. The remaining structures in the town are located off the dirt road running from Pickens County Route 1 to the Tombigbee River. The nineteenth century cemetery, approximately three-quarters of an acre in size, is located about 1300 feet south of the T intersection on the east side of Cotton Street. Most of the nineteenth century white citizens of Memphis are buried here. The cemetery contains an interesting collection of nineteenth century tombstones and funerary artifacts, most of which are deteriorating. Several family plots are surrounded by cast iron fences. All trees of any size have recently been cut, giving the cemetery a denuded appearance.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Town:

1. Memphis is located less than a mile from the Alabama-Mississippi border on the west bank of a U-shaped bend in the Tombigbee River approximately 35 miles downriver from Columbus. Its history parallels that of other extinct Alabama towns along the Tombigbee like Vienna, Fairfield, and Warsaw. Rising with the economic prosperity of the South in the two decades before the Civil War, the fortunes of these towns deteriorated as the loss of river traffic to the railroads combined with the post-Civil War decline in cotton production to remove their source of wealth.

Only about 90 square miles of Pickens County lie on the west bank of the Tombigbee. Still referred to as "over the river," this area has possessed closer ties to Macon and Prairie Point in Mississippi than to Pickensville, Carrollton, and Aliceville in Alabama. (Mr. John Lee) The southwestern quarter of Pickens County along the river is in the Alabama Black Belt, and has one of the richest soils in the state,--a contributing factor in high levels of cotton production before the Civil War. (Dodd, p. 11 and p. 62; Smith, p. 89) The Town of Memphis capitalized on the combination of fertile Black Belt farming and river transport. "In harvest season wagons filled with cotton would form a line reaching from the town to the river's edge to await

the coming of steamboats which would transport the cotton to Mobile. Cotton to be loaded at Memphis was hauled from as far away as Winston County [northwest of Birmingham, Alabama]." (Clements, p. 7) However Dr. Rufus Wyatt later wrote that "from '87 to '98 we had a depression with four, five and six-cent cotton. It was impossible for the negro to make even a bare living." (Wyatt, p. 111) By the late 1850s the Mobile and Ohio Railroad had reached Macon, Mississippi, and by 1887 the St. Louis and San Francisco Railway had been completed to Aliceville and Carrollton, Alabama. Although the importance of river traffic declined, steamboats continued to ply the Tombigbee into the early twentieth century. ("The Formation of Pickens County . . .", pp. 1 and 2)

Formerly a white community, the population of Memphis today is entirely Black. The racial shift is difficult to trace although it seems that descendants of the original white settlers moved to towns like Macon, Dancy, and Aliceville which offered greater opportunity. A few white people stayed on, and after their deaths, only the Black community remained. The last white citizen of Memphis was Mr. Jim Parker who resided in the house in which he had been born. Parker died in 1967. Two houses erected by Memphis' Black citizens have been recorded by HABS. (See Will Boykin House, HABS No. AL-870 and Charity House, HABS No. AL-871.)

2. According to an article written by E. P. Windham, of Pickens County, Memphis was the second site on the Tombigbee River bearing that name. Located downriver from the present Town of Memphis, the first site (here designated as Oulebre-Memphis) was occupied by a frenchman named George Oulebre (also called Obra) and his family when the St. Stephens survey party came into the area around 1820. About 1830, after Oulebre had died, his wife and children abandoned the site, moving some fifteen miles downriver. An account of Mrs. Oulebre's later testimony about Oulebre-Memphis related by Windham states that,

...Memphis had been built by a party of Frenchmen, who had come to the United States after the defeat of Napoleon and it was two years after the building [structure at Oulebre-Memphis] was completed before she and her husband came to live there. The Trading Company, of which her husband had been a member, was made up of Frenchmen who came to the U.S.A. after the end of the European War. Headquarters of the company were at Mobile and New Orleans and the two head agents were named Muserat, who she had seen at Memphis, and Jourdan, who she had never seen, and both had returned to France about the year 1821 [the year of Napoleon's death].

Windham theorized that the French family at Memphis, like many other Frenchmen in the Gulf South area, were absorbed in plans to free Napoleon from St. Helena. In that instance the Oulebre-Memphis site would have originated for reasons of military strategy as well as for trade.

3. By the time the 1850 United States Census was taken, Memphis had become a thriving river town of twenty dwelling houses inhabited by twenty-three families. Many of the citizens had been born in Alabama, although Memphis also had settlers from each of the southern seaboard states, Tennessee, Delaware, and Massachusetts. Two of the inhabitants came from Germany and Italy. The following table listing the occupations of the towns people sheds light on the commercial composition of the town:

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of White Males Involved</u>
Farmers	5
Merchants	4
Clerks	3
Tanners	3
Carpenters	2
Physicians	2
Blacksmith	1
Gin Maker	1
Wagon Maker	1

Six males, presumably sons still in the home, were listed as having no occupation. Thomas Bonner from North Carolina and Thomas B. Coleman (possibly Coliman) from Virginia were the two carpenters. James Williams from Georgia was the blacksmith. (U.S. Free Census of Alabama, 1840, Pickens County, pp. 11-13)

4. Memphis had a number of inhabitants who figured prominently in the history of the area:

- a. James Williamson Wallis (1816-1891) the one who laid out the town site, came to Somerville, Alabama, from Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1820. Graduating from the University of Alabama in 1836, he settled in Memphis five years later. (Stuart Covington, Birmingham News, July 31, 1960). Wallis was a farmer and inventor, experimenting with an oscillating saw cotton picker similar to mechanical cotton pickers in use today. The cotton picker did not prove successful until after Wallis' death when it was patented as the Wallis-Lispenard cotton picker in March 1893 (Clements, p. 9). Although Wallis is popularly credited with the invention of this machine, family correspondence indicates that Lispenard was responsible for the finished design which overcame certain critical difficulties in the Wallis machine. (Letter from Claude Wallis to J. Wallis, November 11, 1891) Wallis was married to Margaret McClanahan Crockett whose tombstone bears the legend, "Mother of Memphis."
- b. Bird Ivy, mentioned briefly earlier, was one of the wealthiest men in this section of the country and the expression "as rich as Bird Ivy" was used in place of "as rich as Croesus." (Clements, p. 9) Ivy's log house was still standing when Dr. Rufus Wyatt moved to Memphis. Located near Owl Creek bottom, Ivy's place encompassed a lagoon and uncovered rail pens for corn storage which extended for hundreds of yards. Three hundred hogs were kept on an acre of high land fenced with split rails. Dr. Wyatt eventually bought Ivy's place and filled in the lagoon. (Clements, p. 9 and Wyatt, pp. 77 - 78) The Memphis cemetery stands on land donated to the town by Ivy. (Clements, 7. See also Supplemental Material, D. 8)
- c. Memphis was the home of several merchants including Gus Coleman, Albion Hugh Cooper, Mr. Long, and Mrs. McCarthy. Gus Coleman was said to have done \$100,000 worth of business a year. Cooper was born in Tuscaloosa and married Eppie Wallis, one of J. M. Wallis' daughters. Coleman, Cooper, and McCarthy were all mentioned in Autobiography of a little man. Wyatt was particularly impressed with the success of Mr. A. H. Cooper. (Clements, p. 8 and Wyatt, pp. 77 - 82)

- d. One particularly interesting person associated with Memphis was Dr. R. R. "Rufe" Wyatt. Born in Pickens County in 1857, Wyatt wrote The Autobiography of a Little Man, published in 1939. Although short on chronology, the book is one of the best accounts of life in the area. After spending his childhood in Pickens County, Wyatt studied medicine in Louisville, Kentucky, and settled in Memphis on August 17, 1888 taking the place of a Dr. Hopkins. In addition to practicing medicine, Wyatt bought and sold real estate, eventually moving away from Memphis. "I continued to buy adjacent farms around Memphis and clearing land for forty years and had a very fine, well-equipped farm which I sold in recent years, and am now living in the neighborhood I knew as a small boy." (Wyatt, p. 168) Although Wyatt married several times, he had no surviving children. To date, the Ada Sessions Frant Library in Macon, Mississippi, has located no obituary for Wyatt.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Plans:

- a. Plat Map of Memphis, Pickens County Deed Book W, page 488 1/2 (recorded 1912). Included with Supplemental Material, Section D. 2.
- b. Map of Memphis and Surrounding Area drawn by J. W. Wallis (no date). Collection of Mrs. H. W. Cooper, 109 Wayne Street, Macon, Mississippi. Included with Supplemental Material, Section D. 3.

2. Old Views: None located.

Interviews:

Mrs. Sallie Bell, Memphis, Alabama, August 5, 1978. Mrs. Bell provided information about her house and about the town.

Mrs. Hugh Wyatt Cooper, 109 Wayne Street, Macon, Mississippi, July 7 and 12, 1978. Mrs. Cooper's husband was the son of A. H. Cooper, one of Memphis' successful merchants. His mother was Eppie Wallis, consequently Mrs. Cooper has all of the Wallis family papers which she allowed to be photographed for this history. Mrs. Cooper also helped clarify the Wallis geneology.

Jack B. Elliott, Jr., J Bar E Ranch, Palo Alto, Mississippi, July 8, 1978. Jack Elliott is the author of A Cultural Resources Survey of Selected Construction Areas in the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway in Alabama and Mississippi, Volume II. He had done extensive research on the Tombigbee River Valley. He shared various newspaper references to Memphis which he had found.

Robert Hugh Kirksey, Judge of Probate Court, Carrollton, Alabama, July 7, 1978. Judge Kirksey was instrumental in securing the twentieth century incorporation of Memphis. He shared information in his files pertaining to the town. He also confirmed the paucity of information in the Deed Records about Memphis.

John Lee, Dancy, Pickens County, Alabama, June 29, 1978. Mr. Lee's family has lived west of the Tombigbee River since the early nineteenth century. His uncle, E. P. Windham, left memoirs relating the history of the area. Mr. Lee shared all the information he had collected on Memphis and made reference to other sources.

Ernestine Parker, Merchant and Farmers Bank, Macon, Mississippi, June 20, 1978. Miss Parker grew up in Memphis. She provided information about her brother Jim Parker who was the last white inhabitant.

John H. Rodgers, 1408 North 14th Street, Columbus, Mississippi, June 19, 1978. Mr. Rodgers owned land in Memphis. He related information about the town during the twentieth century.

Marietha Windham, Memphis, Alabama, August 5, 1978. Mrs. Windham lives in the Parker House. She provided information about the town.

Manuscripts:

Collection of Mrs. Hugh Wyatt Cooper:

Claude Wallis. Letter to J. W. Wallis, November 11, 1891.

J. W. Wallis. "History of the Boundaries of Memphis, Alabama," (April 10, 1891). [included with Supplemental Material, Section D. 7.]

J. W. Wallis. Letter to Col. L. W. Stone, March 1877. Excerpts included with Supplemental Material, Section D. 6.

Deed to J. W. Wallis, Pickens County Sheriff's Sale
(August 14, 1846). Included with Supplemental Material,
Section D. 5.

Petition to the Alabama Senate and House of
Representatives for Incorporation of Memphis (November
26, 1845). Included with Supplemental Material, Section
D. 4.

Collection of Mr. John Lee:

Clements, Ernestine R. (Mrs. W. G.). "Ghost Towns of
Pickens County." Unpublished paper, n.d. (ca. 1968?)

"The Formation of Pickens County..." Tour Information
compiled for the Pickens County Historical Association,
n.d. (ca. 1976)

Windham, E. P. "John Perkins came to Alabama...."
Undated article (ca. 1940). Lee Windham's nephew,
stressed that this paper was based on his uncle's
recollections and on stories he had heard from other
people. It has been reprinted in Elliott's A Cultural
Resources Survey, Volume II.

3. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Books: Office of the Probate Judge, Pickens County,
Carrollton, Alabama.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Clanahan, James F., The history of Pickens County,
Alabama, 1540-1920 (Carrollton, Alabama: Clanahan
Publications, 1964). In Columbus-Lowndes County Library,
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Clark, Alleen. "Old Memphis Tombs Signal for Ghosts."
Jackson Clarion Ledger, November 21, 1952. In library of
the Mississippi Department of Archives and History,
Jackson, Mississippi.

Covington, Stuart. "Memphis on the Tombigbee."
Birmingham (Alabama) News, July 31, 1960-. In University
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Dodd, Donald B., Historical Atlas of Alabama
(Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1974).

Elliott, Jack D., Jr., A Cultural Resources Survey of
Selected Construction Areas in the Tennessee-Tombigbee
Waterway : Alabama and Mississippi, Volume II
(Starkville, Mississippi: Mississippi State Department
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Dimmed." The Tuscaloosa News, April 9, 1978, pages 1D
and 12D. University of Alabama Library, Tuscaloosa,
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University of Alabama Press, 1977).

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Its First Settlement in 1817 to 1856 (Carrollton,
Alabama: Pickens Republican Office, 1856). In Special
Collections, Mississippi State University Library,
Starkville, Mississippi.

U.S. Census of Population, 1850, Pickens County,
Alabama, pp. 11-13. Microfilm on file in library of the
Mississippi Department of Archives & History, Jackson
Mississippi.

Wyatt, R. R., The Autobiography of a Little Man (Macon,
Mississippi: Macon Beacon Office, 1939). In Ada
Sessions Fant Library, Macon, Mississippi, and Special
Collections, Mississippi State University Library,
Starkville, Mississippi. Excerpt included with
Supplemental Material, Section D. 8.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION ON FIVE MEMPHIS HOUSES

- A. WILL BOYKIN HOUSE: See data pages for HABS No. AL-870.
- B. CHARITY HOUSE: See data pages for HABS No. AL-871.
- C. The SALLIE BELL HOUSE is a one-story two-bay frame double shotgun house covered with asbestos siding. The seven room house faces east and is surrounded by a dirt garden and fruit trees on the south and east sides. The northern half of the house is an addition. Porches have been attached to the east, west, and south sides of the house. The porch on the south side has been partially enclosed. The house is covered with a gable roof of corrugated tin. The ridge line runs east-west. Sallie Bell stated that only the three southern rooms of the house were

there when she bought it in 1936. She added the three adjoining rooms and enclosed a portion of the south porch at a later date. The treatment of the trim is the most notable feature of this house. The simple 1 x 6 cornice has been painted bright pink along with the wooden door and window frames and the columns supporting the porch. The ceiling of the porch has been painted bright blue. Each piece of wooden porch furniture has been painted both colors.

- D. The DOOLEY HOUSE, a 5-bay one-story frame house in fair condition, is approximately square in plan and rests on brick piers about 3' high. A gabled portico at the center of the east side of the house is supported by two sets of paired square columns at each end. Structural evidence indicated that there was a similar portico on the center of the north side. A screened verandah of more recent date extends the length of the west facade. The house is topped by a hipped roof pierced by two interior stuccoed brick chimneys. Most of the exterior finish details are Greek Revival in character. The front door on the east has sidelights and transoms; structural evidence indicates the north door had a Greek key surround. (check photo-data). The house has corner pilasters and pilasters where the east portico joins the house. The double-hung windows are shuttered and contain 9 over 9 sash.

The house consists of five rooms. Two east rooms are located to either side of a large central hall which leads into a large central room flanked by the two west rooms. The southeastern and northeastern rooms are both served by one chimney and the northeastern and northwestern rooms are served by the other. The house has wooden floors and a wooden board-and-batten ceiling. The doors are two-panelled. One of the most intriguing features of the Dooley House are its four identical wooden mantels. The opening of each fireplace is framed by a "paddle" on either side. The handles of the paddles extend up to a plain frieze and simple mantel shelf. An identical, though smaller, mantel has been found in the oldest of the two rooms of the Charity house (HABS No. AL-871)

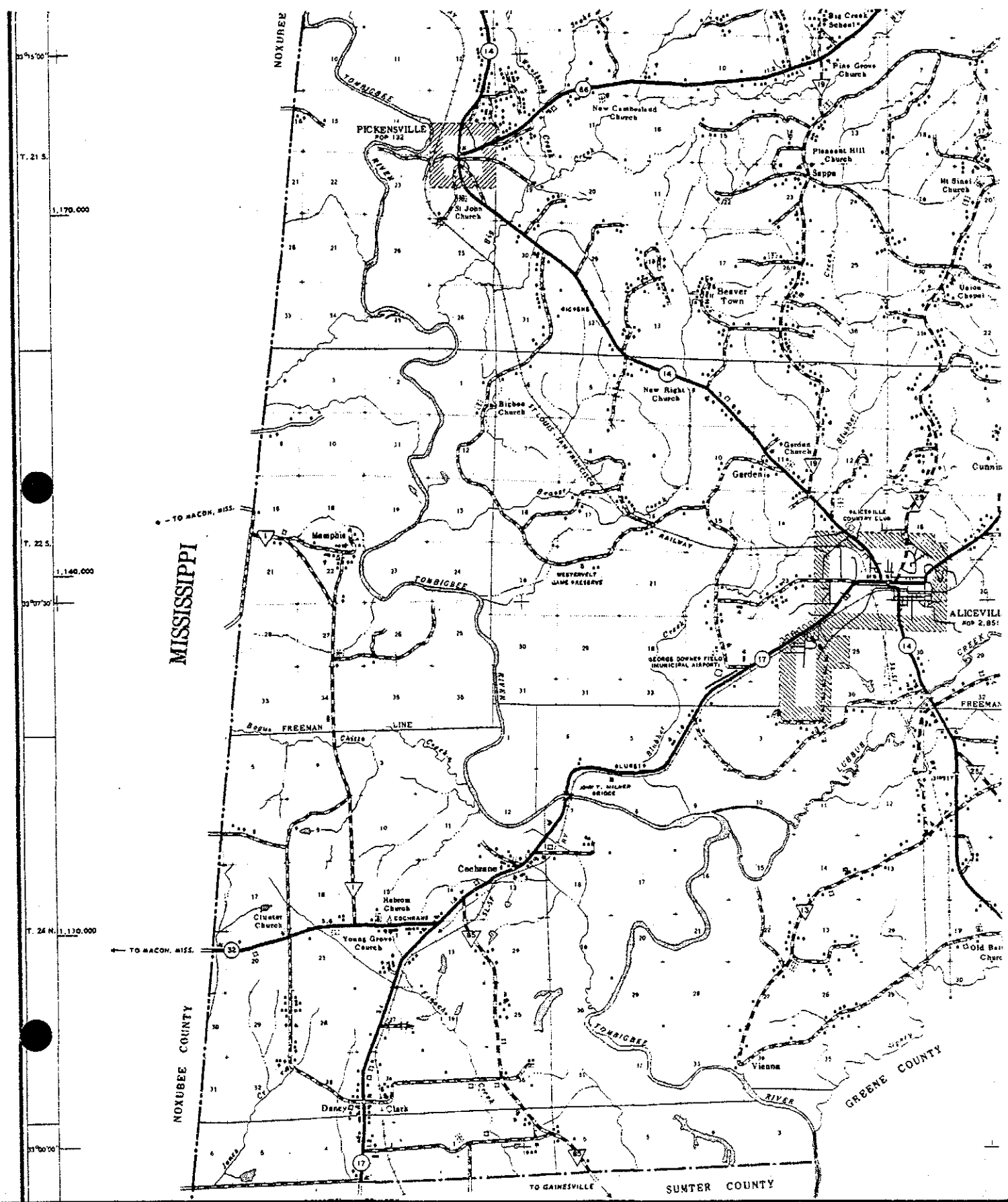
- E. The PARKER HOUSE is located 300 feet south of the T intersection on the west side of Church Street. This one-story frame structure facing east consists of a central block with one wing. The house is supported on brick piers 3 feet high.

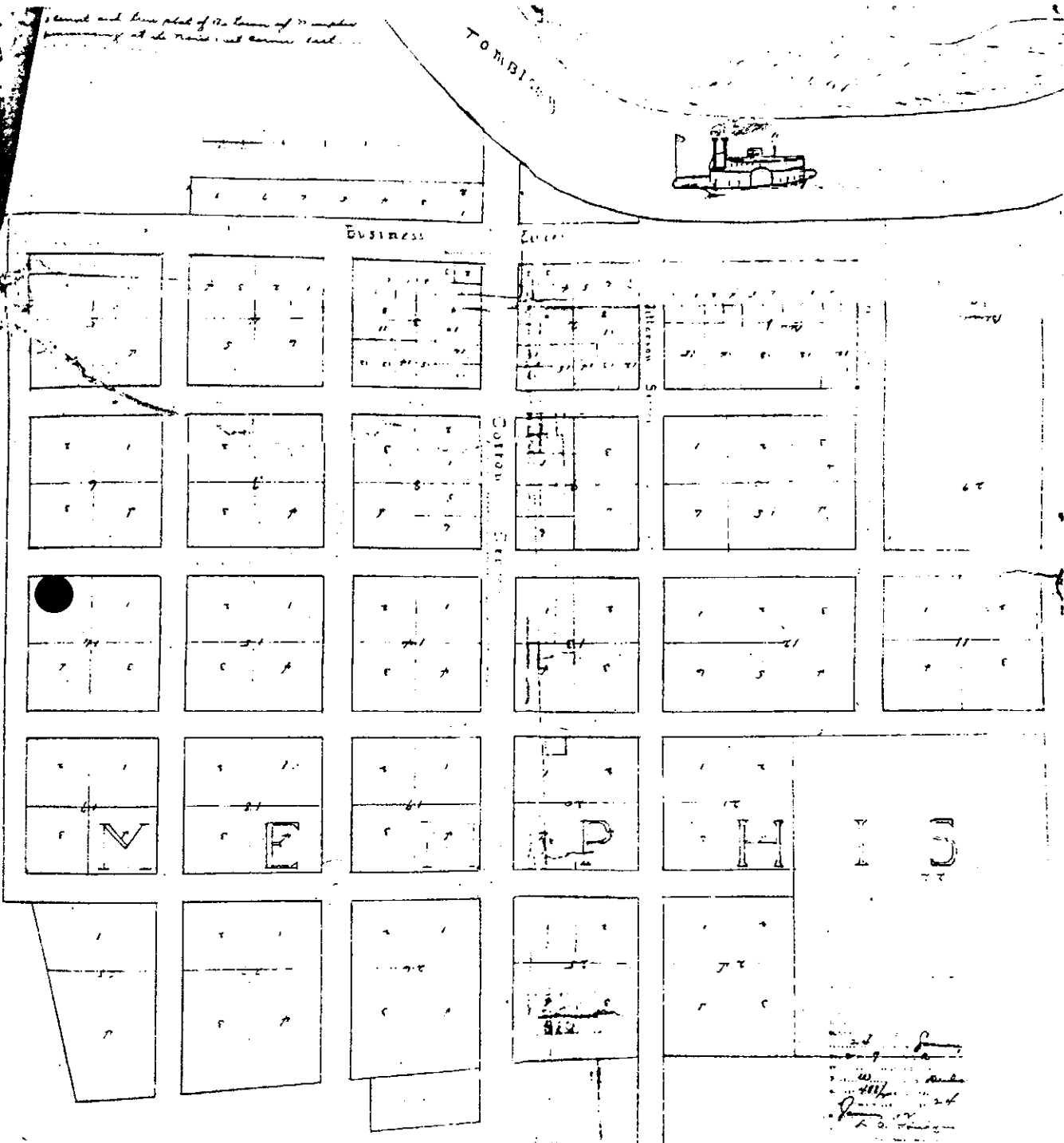
The central block consists of four rooms disposed along an east-west axis. The wing contains two rooms and is centered on the north side of the central block. The house is topped by two intersecting gable roofs. The roof with the east-west ridge covers the central block while the roof with the north-south ridge extends over the wing. The roof is steeply pitched which is characteristic of houses in Carrollton, the county seat of Pickens County. The house has two interior chimneys in the central block. Fine marble mantels surround the fireplace openings of the chimney serving the two easternmost rooms

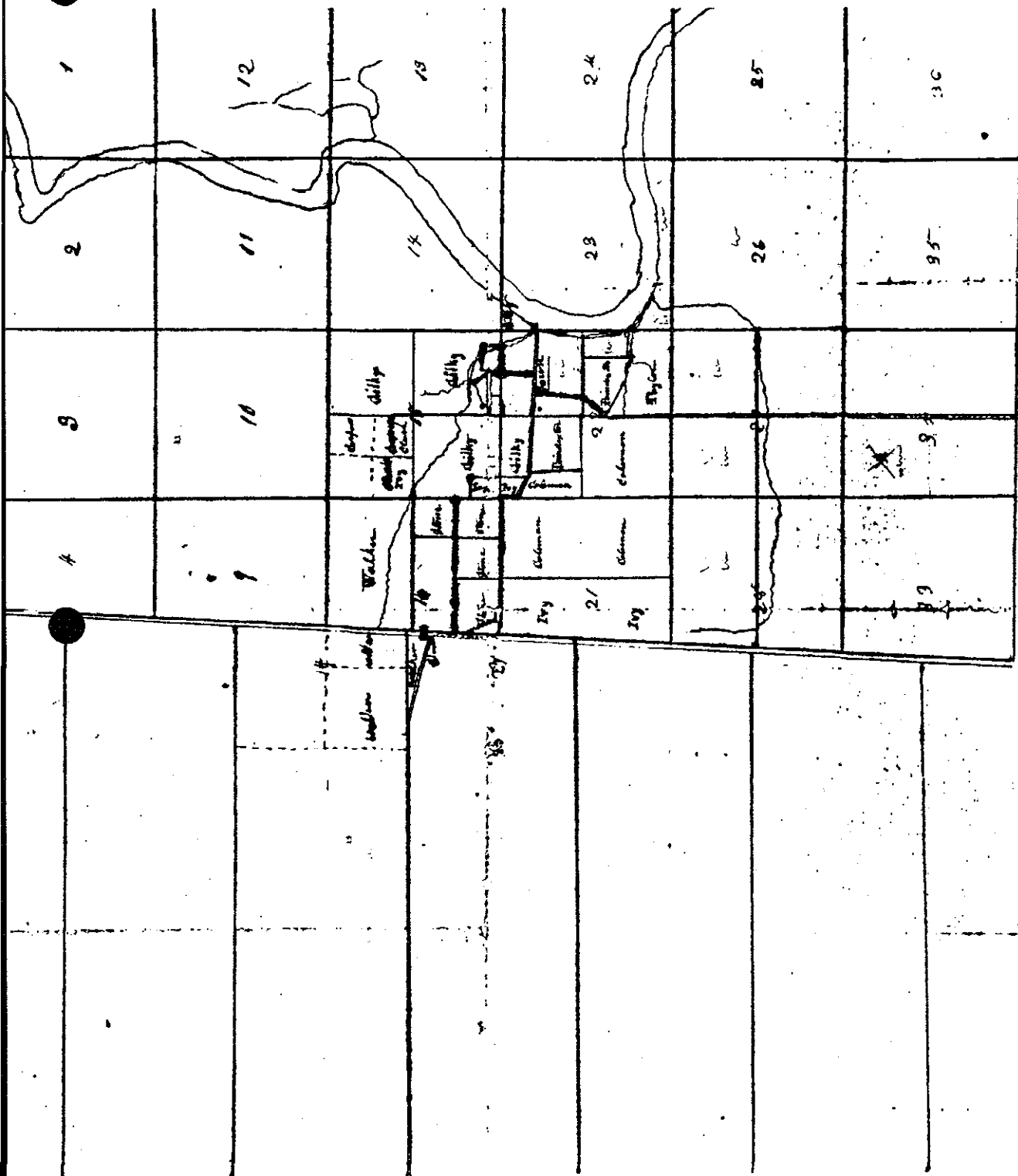
Prepared by: Betty K. Bird
Project Historian
Historic American Buildings
Survey
August 1978

D. Supplemental Material:

1. Portion of Pickens County Highway Map, State of Alabama Highway Dept. (1971)







3. J.W. Wallis, Map of Memphis and Surrounding Land Holdings (no date).
Collection of Mrs. H.W. Cooper.

4. Petition for the Incorporation of the Town of Memphis (1845).
Collection of Mrs. H.W. Cooper.

Memphis Nov 26th 1845

To the Honorable the Senate
and House of Representatives in
General Assembly Convened

We the Citizens of the
Town of Memphis in your
State and of the County of
Pickens. Would ask
that our town be incorporated
with the following privileges and
powers

Wm. Wallis

J. L. King

J. Martineau

Geo. Webb

J. A. Pruitt

Buckley Sharp

J. S. Evans

Wm. D. Dyer

Ben. Coleman

J. B. Coleman

Chas. M. Pinnard

Thos. Walker

Wm. Stephens

John H. Dyer

Wm. Dyer

William Chamberlain

George L. Welsh

J. Rosenthal

Wm. Dyer

Wm. Dyer

126
That the town of Memphis in the County of
Pickens and State of Alabama, be and the
same is hereby incorporated, in conformity
with the plan adopted by the original
survey and laying off of said town,
and the incorporated limits shall
include the north east fractional
quarter section of Township twenty two
and of Range seventeen west, (upon
which the said town is situated) - except ten acres
square in the south west corner, and ten acres
square in the north west corner of said quarter
section of land.

22
That on the first Friday in March next, and
on that day in each succeeding year, there shall
be held an election, between the hours of ten
AM and three PM, to choose by ballot
out of the free holders and house holders
within the incorporated limits, five persons
(viz) a President and four others to act as
Commissioners for said incorporation,
which first election shall be held by any
magistrate of the beat, and two other persons
appointed by him. And also at the same time
one town Constable, one Secretary one Treasurer
and one Wharfinger, And each succeeding
election shall be held by the President and
one of the Commissioners chosen from their
number

impose such fines for neglect of any or misconduct in office as to them may seem proper

provided the fine does not exceed twenty five dollars, and the President and Commissioners shall have power to pass ~~and enforce~~ laws for the good order of said town, and impose a fine upon any one transgressing said laws, provided the fine does not exceed ten dollars, and a warrant from under the hand of the president for the time being, directed to the Constable or any person appointed for the purpose, may levy upon and take of the goods and chattels of such offender and the money he made thereof in thirty days

4th That the President and Commissioners shall have power, to have removed any impediment in the streets at the expense of ~~the person~~ putting the same there

5th That the President and Commissioners shall direct how all public improvement on the streets shall be done

6th It shall be the duty of the president to order the time and the place of the meeting of the Commissioners, and to preside over their meetings and if the president be absent, any one of the Commissioners may be chosen to act as President pro tem, and three of said five shall constitute a quorum to do business and they shall have power to order an election at any time

7th It shall be the duty of the secretary to keep a correct record of all the proceedings of the Commissioners

8th It shall be the duty of the treasurer to hold all moneys that may come into his hands belonging to the incorporation, subject to the control of the Commissioners.

9th That any free white male person twenty one years of age who has resided within the incorporation three months previous to the election, shall be entitled to vote for the Commissioners or any other of the town officers

10th That whereas the extreme east end of Cotton street, running to the river, is used as a wharf and the same is not fit for receiving goods in its present condition, all goods whatever being shipped or landed on said wharf or landing, shall be subject to a tax or wharfrage as follows, five cents per barrel, five cents per bale of Cotton, twenty five cents per cord of wood, two and one half cents for baling and rope by the piece, and all other things not mentioned at the rate of five cents per barrel, and no goods or merchandise of any kind shall remain on said wharf longer than twenty four hours without being charged half the original wharfrage, and the money

as may be directed by the President and Commissioners.

11th It shall be the duty of the Wharfingers to Collect the Wharfage on all goods as above specified, making the articles subject to the Wharfage, and pay over to the treasurer as directed by the President and Commissioners.

12th The President and Commissioners shall not have power to levy any tax upon any goods or merchandise whatever bought or sold in said town, nor on any personal or real estate therein.

13th That the inhabitants of said town liable to road duty, shall be liable to work on the streets, ten days if required or otherwise pay such street tax as may be imposed by the President & Commissioners not exceeding five dollars per annum, and be exempted from road duty and of incorporation.

14th If any person thinks himself aggrieved by any fine imposed he may appeal as from a magistrates Court.

15th

That the president of the Commissioners
of said town, shall ex officio
be a justice of the peace
~~within the limits of jurisdiction~~
after giving bond and security as
now required of other justices of
the peace.

16th

That the town Constable be required
to give bond and security as
other Constables; and be vested
with the same authority.

To all to whom these Presents shall come.

I, *W. H. Davis* SHERIFF OF PICKENS COUNTY, SEND GREETING:

WHEREAS, by virtue of a writ of *fi fa* issued out of the *County* Court of *Tuscaloosa* County, directed to any Sheriff of the State of Alabama, and to me delivered, tested the *sixth* day of *August* in the year our Lord one thousand eight hundred and

forty six I was commanded to make of the goods and chattels, lands and tenements of *John H. Wallis & C. Wallis* *Deeds* in *say* County, the sum of *four thousand & ninety five & 4/100* Dollars which *Bank* of the state of *Alabama* had recovered against *them* in said *County* Court, for his together with the further sum of *eleven*

and also the further sum of which to the said *Bank* was adjudged for *his* cost, in and about *his* suit in that behalf expended, as by said writ of *fi fa* reference being thereto had more fully appears. And whereas after the coming of said writ, and before the return day thereof, I did by virtue of the said writ of *fi fa* upon the lands hereinafter particularly described, and have sold the said lands as is hereinafter mentioned at public auction, according to the statute in such cases made and provided, to *James M. Wallis* for *one hundred and twenty* Dollars that being the highest sum bid for the same.

NOW, Know Ye, that I, the said *W. H. Davis*, the Sheriff as aforesaid, by virtue of the said writ of *fi fa* and of the statute in such cases made and provided, in consideration of the sum of *one hundred & twenty* Dollars to me in hand paid, by the said *James M. Wallis* the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, have granted, bargained and sold, and do by these presents grant, bargain and sell unto the said *James M. Wallis* and to his heirs and assigns forever, *the following land viz west half of North West quarter of Section thirty five and South east quarter of North West quarter of Section thirty five Township twenty one of Range fifteen west*

in the district of land offered for sale at Tuscaloosa, in the State of Alabama, containing *one hundred & twenty* Acres or less - acres, with its appurtenances, and all the estate, right, title and interest, which the said *defendants* had in the said tract or parcel of land, on the *seventh* day of *February* A. D. 184*5* or at any time since, had or now hath, to have and to hold, the lands and premises, and every part thereof, with the appurtenances unto the said *James M. Wallis* his heirs and assigns forever, as fully and absolutely as I, the said *W. H. Davis* Sheriff as aforesaid, and under the authority aforesaid, might, could or ought to sell and convey the same.

In WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this the *seventh* day of *December* 184*5* *W. H. Davis* Sheriff.

MEMPHIS, ALABAMA
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6. PORTIONS OF LETTER FROM J.W. WALLIS TO COL. L.W. STONE, MARCH 1877

Letter in the possession of Mrs. H.W. Cooper, 109 Wayne Street, Macon, Mississippi. Transcribed by Betty K. Bird, July 7, 1978. Punctuation was unclear and has been slightly altered.

Memphis, Alabama
March 1877

Coln L.W. Stone

Dear Sir

By the kindness of Mr. Cooper we place before you papers relating to claim of lot of land in the town of Memphis to which there appears to be conflicting claims between Mr. Bird Ivy and myself.

I will give as distinct a description through which the land has passed as possible. The land on which the Town of Memphis situated originally from the Indians belonged to Mr. Thos. Ivy Mr. Bird Ivy's father. [sic] Mr. Bird Ivy was one of the executors of his fathers will at the sale of the land of the estate. The fractional quarter section, on which the town is situated was bid off by E.C. Wallis, who was my brother, I bought the interest of E C Wallis, the deeds to the land remaining in B Ivy until I had paid for all of the lands which I bought of the estate lands, when or at which time Mr. Ivy executed deed to me. The lot of land in question is Lot No. 9 in Block No. Three, having a front on Cotton Street of 55 feet and extending back in the block 160 feet. The lot was sold by me at a very early age of the settlement of the Town to F. Toland for the sum of fifty dollars. Toland built a very small house on the lot and occupied it for several years and sold it to John B. Coleman, and getting deed to Tom B. Ivy (as the titles were yet in M Ivy) which was about the year 1851. J.B. Coleman deeded the lot to S.W. Gilkey who occupied it a short time, Gilkey deeded the lot to S.D. Swallow who rebuilt fitting up the best storehouse in the town, and built a livery stable on the back part of the lot. I bought as you will see from Swallow in 1854 for the sum of \$1000 taking and holding quiet possession ever since, and paying tax on the lot for all intervening time. The houses on the lot were destroyed by fire soon after the war and I never sold the lot after buying from Swallow before the war. John B. Coleman had become indebted to Evans & Carman merchants of New York and his property in Memphis

was sold on account of Evans and Carman by the sheriff Evans & Carman I suppose being purchasers and Ivy to befriend Coleman I suppose pay to Evans & Carman the redemption money which amt you will see some six hundred dollars, and takes deed from Evans and Carman, in which deed is mentioned by halves the lot in question. You will notice in deed to Mr. Ivy there are several lots including his residence and other improved lots. Coleman dies and neaver redeems from Ivy. Gilkey dies. Swallow leaves the country and not heard of for long time since.... Mr. Ivy has been just as honest in this matter as has been his manner in all business transactions with him and there has neaver been the slightest jar in our long tried friendships.

J.W. Wallis

Page - 1

I know its my concern - as it were, that whereas, persons enquiring of me, to know the true history, condition, and situation of the what may be considered public property in the Town of Memphis in the County of Pickens - State of Alabama - and as the old records for the County have been destroyed by fire, and the original deeds probably not to be found, It may be right that I give a true and correct statement of the situation of the referred to property, as well also I give explanations of boundaries of blocks and lots in the Town - and it is this, that, that whereas I was the owner of the land on which the Town is situated, that I located the Town, and in person I surveyed, and ran off into blocks by streets, and subdividing blocks into lots, running as the compass then pointed without any variation, and that front or first Street parallel with the River, and Cotton Street at right angles, are ninety nine feet in width, - and all other Streets are Sixty Six feet in width, ~~that~~ the Church on Cotton Street was built from Subscription, for the use and benefit of all orthodox Christian denominations, and the land on which the Church is located was by me deeded in trust to the Corporate body of the Town, for the purposes as above pointed, and as the record of said deed was destroyed by fire, and the deed probably not to be found, we will state that to commence at the North east corner of the lot on which the Church is situated, and run west on Cotton Street ^① Six Rods, and from the same Starting point South on fourth on Church Street ^② ~~Quarantine~~ Rods and from those terminal points, at right angles to point of intersection, will give about that which is right - and that the Cemetery was given by Mr Bird by, for a free burying ground - ^③ and that the ~~east end of~~ ^{the} Cotton Street where the street terminates ~~from the river~~ ^{from the river} ~~is given~~ ^{is given} by one for a public Steamboat landing, for the benefit of the Town, and I think

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it will be seen in the act of incorporation, that the corporate body have power to levy or assess a tax or warfage on goods in pappings in landing, or being shipped, (the act of incorporation is not new before me) any way the acting corporate authorities for the town, legislated for, and took charge of the public property as they held the same in trust, and the town was incorporated in the year 1845 or not long before or after that date - and I with my family settled in the town on the first day of november eighteen hundred and forty one - being the first settlement after the native indians, as to the boundaries of the blocks and lots, the original map or plat of the town will show distinctly, as to the center or interior blocks and lots, on the north on the west and South the outer blocks extend to the land line on which the town is situated, making the blocks of unequal size and on the west in part by the river, blocks thirty, thirty one - and a block or piece of land adjacent and north of Cotton Street, and east of what was originally block (23) Twenty Three which is now attached to block Twenty Three, are bounded on the east by the river, East Side lot of land on the north of Cotton Street. extends north from Cotton Street (20) Twenty Roads. or to the line of the first street north of Cotton Street, and on a line east to the river - it is seen that block Twenty Three was originally ninety nine feet wide on Cotton Street on the south, and extended back north seven square lots, the lot on Cotton Street being divided into two lots making eight lots originally in what was then block Twenty Three, In the extreme north east of the quarter section. there is a lot of land, originally sold to H.B. Williams the boundaries of which is on the north the land line, on the west by first or front street coming South to block twenty three

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thence by twenty three on the west to the Southern line or
 side of this mentioned first street north of Cotton Street
 on the South by this said line, (it will be seen in the
 original deed that the Southern boundary is mentioned as
 at or near the mouth of the creek, and calls for twenty
 acres more or less, might be five acres or fifty acres)
 It will be seen that in the early settling or deeds to lots
 were made by Bird Jay, here is the reason, this $\frac{1}{4}$ section
 on which the town is situated, belonged to the estate of
 Bird Jay's father, and Bird Jay was executor of his father's
 will - the land was sold on one - two - three and four
 years time, I settled the town directly after purchasing
 much Bird Jay making deeds as I directed, as the land had
 not been deeded to me - I will mention here that there
 has been in the description of property in some cases, where,
 the property has been transferred, quite a departure from the
 proper or original description of the property, as for instance
 where I would sell and describe as a half lot, in a few
 transfers or sales of the half lot it is written half block,
 as also lots or blocks not in their proper description deeded
 where parties making deed never hold any deed from
 which to describe - It is seen that block ② twenty two is a large
 block, extending west from fourth or Church Street to the line
 of of the $\frac{1}{4}$ section, the northern boundary is ten rods north
 of Harrison Street, on the east with Church Street to $\frac{1}{4}$ section
 line, it is seen that twenty four is next adjacent north of
 twenty two, twenty three is located here, but not located
 here - and that part on the river between Harrison and
 Jefferson Streets and between blocks thirty and thirty one
 and in front or east of block O one, has always been
 held intact in the interest and protection of the street
 and the adjacent block ones, as there is not sufficient wharf

land for the width of the street, and the river bank liable to come, which may in part yet be seen endorsed on the original map of the town - and front or first Street terminates South at block thirty, Second Street terminates at block thirty - Third Street terminates at block twenty-nine, fourth Street extends on South to meet road leading South from town - and Harrison Street terminates east at front Street and west at block twenty-two Jefferson Street terminates east at front Street, and first Street north of Cotton Street terminates at block twenty-three - and to explain further as to the numbering and boundaries of blocks - blocks twenty-nine - thirty - thirty-one - and a lot adjacent north of Cotton Street and east of what was then block twenty three, was a reservation, as may be seen by reference to the original map - it is seen that the blocks commence numbering in the South and end in the north west at twenty eight - after a time it was desired to sell what is now block twenty nine and twenty eight being the next preceding number, thus it was numbered as it appears in its place on the map, and it is bounded on the north by Harrison Street, and on the east commencing at a point where the west line of Second Street crosses Harrison Street and runs South to the $\frac{1}{4}$ Section which land line is the South boundary, and on the west by block eleven no street, (an error was made on the map in painting street) and after a time it was desired to sell what is now thirty, and it is bounded in part on the north by Harrison Street, commencing at a point where the west line of Second Street intersects or crosses Harrison Street, thence running with the course of Harrison Street east to the river, and the river is the boundary on the east - the $\frac{1}{4}$ Section line on the South - and on the west by block twenty-nine no street between -

5

And again it was desirable to sell that ~~that~~ part of before mentioned Reservation now seen as black thirty one, as also that lot north of Cotton Street, and east of black twenty three being on the river — and thirty one is bounded on the north by Cotton Street on the west by front or first Street, commences at the north west corner of the block on Cotton Street and extends South on front Street (20) twenty fads thence east to the River, and the River is the east boundary, and to describe more definitely as to the boundaries of that lot lying east of what was originally black twenty three and on the River, commences at a point (22) ninety nine feet east from first or front Street, it is seen, that it is bounded on the South by Cotton Street on the west by what was originally black twenty three and on the north, by an east and west line running east with the course of the street first north of Cotton Street to $\frac{1}{4}$ section land line at or near the mouth of the Creek, thence the said $\frac{1}{4}$ section line and the River is the eastern boundary — There are some maps of the Town, which are liable to mislead in determining the true situation, from lines being drawn representing streets where there are none, numbering lots incorrectly when I would furnish a map for public use in a short time, the map would be defaced, such was the situation of the maps, from which Mr. Wm Johnston made a map, I pointed out to him the errors, but even then he was misled, if what I have seen are copies of the map he made, which map is probably in the probate office, and should be corrected.

Executed this tenth day of April 1891 —

J. W. Wallis

True
or
false

The State of Alabama Came before me
 Pickens County -- J. B. Parker Notary Public
 -- and -- Official Justice of the Peace in and
 for said County, J. M. Wallie who states upon
 oath that the foregoing statement is a
 true history, condition and situation of the
 Town of Memphis Pickens County Alabama,
 sworn to and subscribed before me --
 this the 20th day of July 1891. --
 J. B. Parker
 J. P. & Off Justice of the Peace

History of
 the town
 of the town
 of Memphis as
 by J. M. Wallie

8. R.R. Wyatt, The Autobiography of a Little Man
(Macon Mississippi: Macon Beacon Office, 1939).
Excerpt concerning Bird Ivy.

Among my earliest friends there were Wood Cockrell and his wife, Miss Fannie. Miss Fannie was the daughter of Bird Ivy, then deceased. Mr. Ivy had been the wealthiest man and most notable planter that ever lived in that section.

Dr. Featherston told me that in Bird Ivy's day instead of saying as rich as Vanderbilt or J. Gould, they would say as "rich as Bird Ivy." Rol Brewer said he could stand on the rise where John Carr's pool now is and see two miles of growing corn belonging to Bird Ivy, in locally famous Owl Creek Bottom. Jack Foster said Ivy never had any cribs but put his corn in a series of rail pens without cover. Jake said the row of pens would extend many hundreds of yards. Jake said Mr. Ivy lived in a log house, which I knew to be true because it was still standing when I came to Memphis, and he wore Jeans clothes and brogan shoes, that he would walk to Memphis and pitch \$50 gold pieces at crackloo or ten pins.

There was a 40-acre lagoon on Mr. Ivy's place inhabited by frogs, crawfish and snakes. This he fenced with split rails and included a place of high land for his hogs to sleep where they could be fed. In this enclosure, Jake said he had 300 hogs and twice a day he would send a 2-horse wagon load of corn, blow a horn to collect the hogs and throw the corn to them. A part of the old rails were still there when I came. This lagoon or quagmire was very dangerous to cows when I came to Memphis as there was no stock law at that time and all stock ran at large. Some twenty years ago this property fell into my hands and it had so filled up I cleared it of timber and planted it in corn. One would have to go a long way to find better land.

Prepared by: Betty K. Bird
Project Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
August 1978

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation done during the 1978 Tennessee-Tobigbee Waterway Project, undertaken by HABS in cooperation with the Interagency Archeological Services, Atlanta, and cosponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobil and Nashville Districts, in compliance with Executive Order 11593, as a mitigative effort in the construction of the waterway. Records were made of eighteen historic sites and structures in the region between Gainesville, Alabama, and Iuka, Mississippi.

The project was executed under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief, and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect, of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Supervisor was James Murray Howard of the University of Illinois. Project Historian was Betty K. Bird of the University of Virginia. The Assistant Historian was Michael Ann Williams (University of Pennsylvania). Foreman was Ruthie D. Wiley of the University of Florida. Student Architects who prepared measured drawings for the project were Carol J. Crandall (Carnegie-Mellon University), Richard J. Cronenberger (University of Miami), Peter G. Darlow (McGill University), Daniel M. Gaines (University of Tennessee), and R. Bradley Mellor (Rice University). The inventory of sites within the project area was carried out by Inventory Supervisor J. A. Chewning of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Assistant Historian for the inventory was Pamela J. Wolf (George Washington University). One structure was recorded during the winter of 1979 by project supervisor Peter G. Darlow (McGill University), Sally K. Tompkins, Project Historian, and Staff Architects Bethanie C. Grashof, Rudy Massengill, and Janet Hochuli (The Cooper Union). Drawings for this structure were completed during the spring of 1979 by staff Architects Peter G. Darlow, Janet Hochuli, James F. Speake and Reginald A. Berry (Howard University). Photographs were taken by David J. Kaminsky in summer of 1978 and by Gil Ford in the spring of 1979.